

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
25 March 1966

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HIGHLIGHTS

The Directorate has reportedly decided to agree to a major concession provided the Buddhists will call off political activity. The concession will be in the composition of the advisory council which is to draft the constitution, so that half its membership are representatives of presently elected provincial and municipal councils.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:

Five US Army battalions have launched a major search-and-destroy operation--LINCOLN--in southern Pleiku and northern Darlac provinces with the objective of destroying Viet Cong/PAVN logistic bases prior to the anticipated Communist summer monsoon offensive (Para. 1). ARVN forces have inflicted heavy losses on the Viet Cong in the opening phase of Operation LONG PHU 961 in the delta province of Vinh Binh (Para. 2). US 1st Infantry Division task force elements are continuing search Operation WAYCROSS in Binh Duong Province to locate an ARVN tank believed captured by the Viet Cong (Para. 3). USMC elements participating in rural reconstruction Operation KINGS in Quang Nam Province were attacked yesterday by an estimated two Viet Cong companies (Para. 4). Month-long Operations GARFIELD and RECONSTRUCTION, by US and ROK forces in Darlac and Phu Yen provinces, respectively, have been terminated (Paras. 5-6). Rice harvest/security Operation FILLMORE was initiated yesterday by ROK marines and US 101st Airborne Division troops near Tuy Hoa, the capital of Phu Yen Province (Para. 7). B-52 Stratofortresses yesterday attacked two separate Viet Cong target complexes in Tay Ninh Province (Para. 8).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:

Premier Ky has announced some concessions in the direction of speeding up the transition to democratic rule, but information is too fragmentary to assess the impact on the Buddhist position (Paras. 1-2).

Both Hue and Da Nang were reported outwardly quiet today, but inflammatory broadcasts continue and there are reports of further plans for political agitation (Para. 3). The Viet Cong are reported to have ordered their "Liberation Students' Association" in Da Nang to step up political activity, as well as possible disorders, to channel antigovernment protests increasingly along anti-American lines (Para. 4). Saigon newspapers representing both Buddhists and militant Catholics are stressing the need for more representative government, and there are indications that Saigon papers are pressing for liberalization of government censorship (Para. 5). The new South Vietnamese economy minister continues to delay promised fiscal measures on the grounds that the political situation is too shaky (Para. 6).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam: Two newly detected unoccupied SAM sites in the Haiphong area extend the SAM envelope about 8 miles northeast of the city (Para. 1).

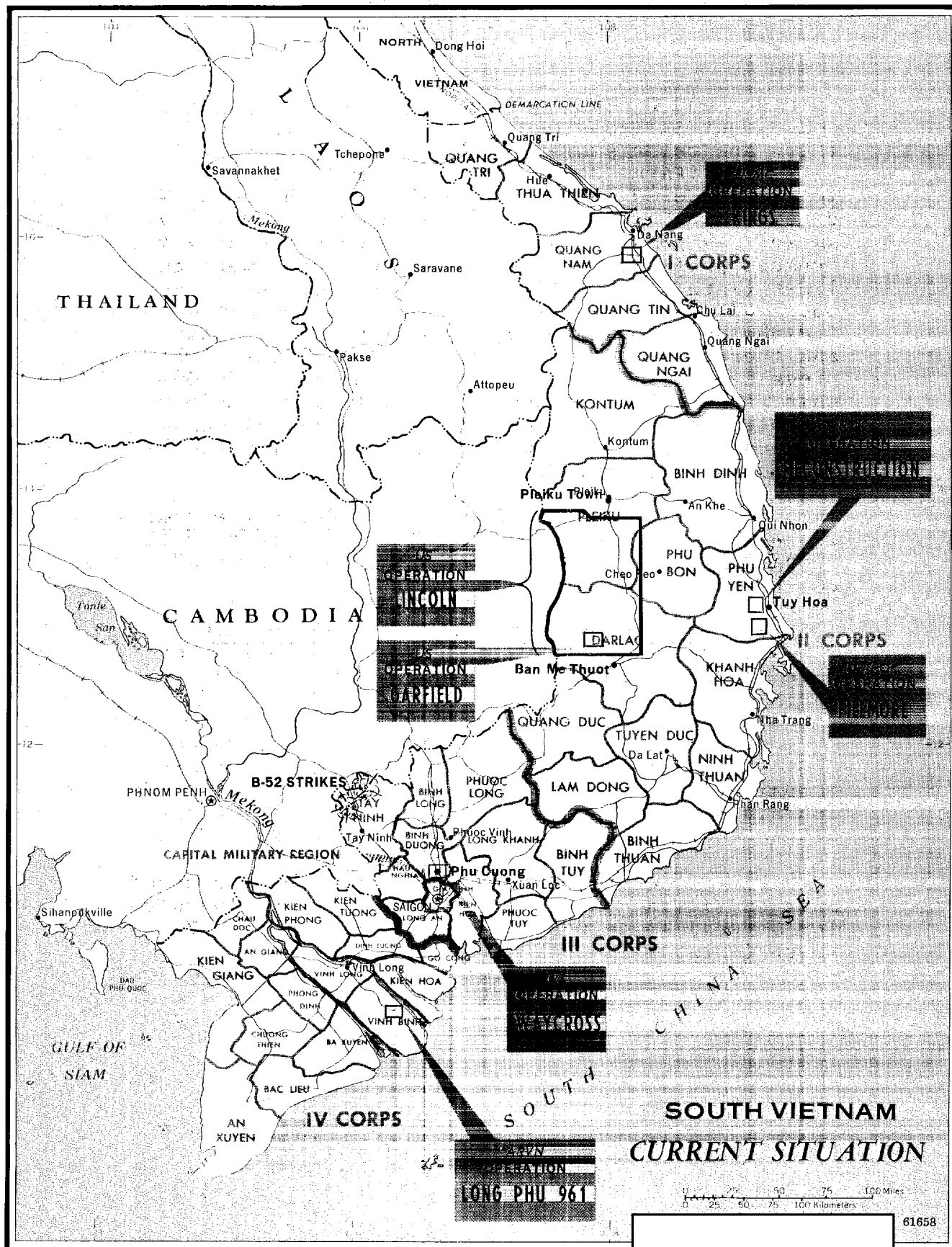
V. Communist Political Developments: Hanoi radio has announced that Le Duan has had a "fraternal visit" with CCP officials in China. Le Duan and his delegation are slated to go to Moscow to attend the Soviet party congress (Para. 2).

VI. Other Major Aspects: Communist-sponsored anti-US Vietnam policy demonstrations are scheduled for several Western European countries on 25-27 March (Para. 1).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. In an effort to locate and destroy Viet Cong/PAVN logistic bases prior to the anticipated Communist summer monsoon offensive, five US Army battalions yesterday launched Operation LINCOLN in southern Pleiku and northern Darlac provinces. Three battalions of the US 1st Air Cavalry Division began the ground sweep with airlanded assaults south of Pleiku town and are presently deploying to the south and southwest. Two battalions of the 3rd Brigade/US 25th Infantry Division are operating from the Ban Me Thuot area northward for eventual link-up with 1st Cavalry Division units at the Darlac/Pleiku border. No contact has thus far been reported with multiregimental enemy forces known to be in the area.

2. ARVN sources claim that 74 Viet Cong were killed and six captured yesterday in the opening phase of Operation LONG PHU 961, an ARVN six-battalion search-and-destroy ground sweep in Vinh Binh Province, 65 miles south of Saigon. Friendly casualties were four killed and 12 wounded.

3. Three battalions of the US 1st Infantry Division are continuing search Operation WAYCROSS to locate an ARVN M-41 tank believed to have been captured by Viet Cong forces during their 23 March assault against ARVN 5th Division Headquarters elements at Phu Cuong, the capital of Binh Duong Province. The tank has not yet been recovered, but contact was established with the Viet Cong yesterday in the Phu Cuong area. US losses were 12 killed and 25 wounded; enemy losses in the three-and-one-half-hour firefight were unknown.

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4. Company-strength elements of two USMC battalions participating in Operation KINGS, a search-and-destroy/rural reconstruction mission initiated in Quang Nam Province on 19 March, yesterday were engaged by an estimated two Viet Cong companies. Five US marines were killed and 15 wounded. Enemy losses were six killed.

5. Operation GARFIELD, a two-battalion search-and-destroy ground sweep conducted by the US 25th Infantry Division in Darlac Province during 25 February - 24 March, has been terminated. Viet Cong forces sustained losses of 123 killed, 18 captured, 74 suspects apprehended, and 62 weapons seized. Seventeen US infantrymen were killed and 63 wounded. During the month of operations, US troops were supported by 328 tactical air sorties.

6. Battalion-strength Korean marines yesterday terminated Operation RECONSTRUCTION, a month-long security mission near Tuy Hoa, in Phu Yen Province. Viet Cong losses were placed at eight killed, 68 captured, 150 suspects apprehended, and 16 weapons seized, as against ROK casualties of 12 killed and 32 wounded.

7. Two battalions of the ROK Marine Brigade and one battalion of the 1st Brigade/US 101st Airborne Division yesterday began a month-long search-and-destroy operation--FILLMORE--to provide security for the rice harvest in the river valley south and west of Tuy Hoa, the capital of coastal Phu Yen Province. No enemy contact has thus far been reported. Previous allied rice harvest security operations in this area--namely, JEFFERSON and VAN BUREN--have yielded excellent results.

8. Fifteen USAF B-52 Stratofortresses yesterday attacked two separate Viet Cong target complexes in northwestern Tay Ninh Province, near the Cambodian border. The strike zones were believed to contain the Viet Cong political and military command agency headquarters for Tay Ninh Province, a Viet Cong training center, and an infiltration point. No ground follow-up operations were scheduled.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The Directorate has reportedly decided to agree to a major concession provided the Buddhists will call off political activity. The concession will be in the composition of the advisory council, which is to draft a constitution, so that half of its membership are representatives of presently elected provincial and municipal councils. No indication of Buddhist reaction to this move has as yet been noted, although Buddhist leaders were earlier reported to consider this formula acceptable.

2. According to Reuters, Ky has already announced that the advisory council will be appointed in a week or two and the elections for a national assembly may be held before 1967.

3. Meanwhile, both Hue and Da Nang regained a semblance of normality today, with the general strike ended in Da Nang and no mass meetings reported in either city. Inflammatory propaganda denouncing both the Saigon and US governments, continues, however, to emanate from the Hue radio station, and to appear on banners around Da Nang. A meeting of "monks, nuns, and believers" was called for this evening at one of Hue's main pagodas, and reports persist that a major Buddhist demonstration is planned for 27 March in Hue and possibly in Saigon as well. There are also rumors that a five-day strike may be launched in Da Nang on 26 March.

4. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the Viet Cong have instructed student cadres belonging to their "Liberation Students' Association" in Da Dang to infiltrate groups sponsoring demonstrations and to try to channel activity along anti-American lines. The student cadres were also to promote the theme that General Thi's removal was due to an "American conspiracy," but to avoid any appeals for Thi's reinstatement. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the principal Communist emphasis will be on political activities, but increased "armed activity in Da Nang" --presumably terrorism--has also been ordered.

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[REDACTED]

5. General Thi is still in Hue, where he is remaining quiet, but showing no apparent intention of returning to Saigon. Buddhist monk Tri Quang, also in Hue, has reportedly been sent assurances from Premier Ky that the government is planning no hostile actions against the Buddhists or against Buddhist interests. A Saigon newspaper, considered to be a mouthpiece for Tri Quang, yesterday described the situation in the country as "extremely critical," and declared that public desires for an elected assembly have been "betrayed." A paper which voices the opinions of northern Catholics also editorialized yesterday on the need for a more democratic regime, but warned its readers to be vigilant so that "our struggle" is not exploited by "the enemy and unscrupulous elements." Press reports indicate that Saigon newspaper publishers are reviving protests against the government's "rigid, illogical" censorship policies.

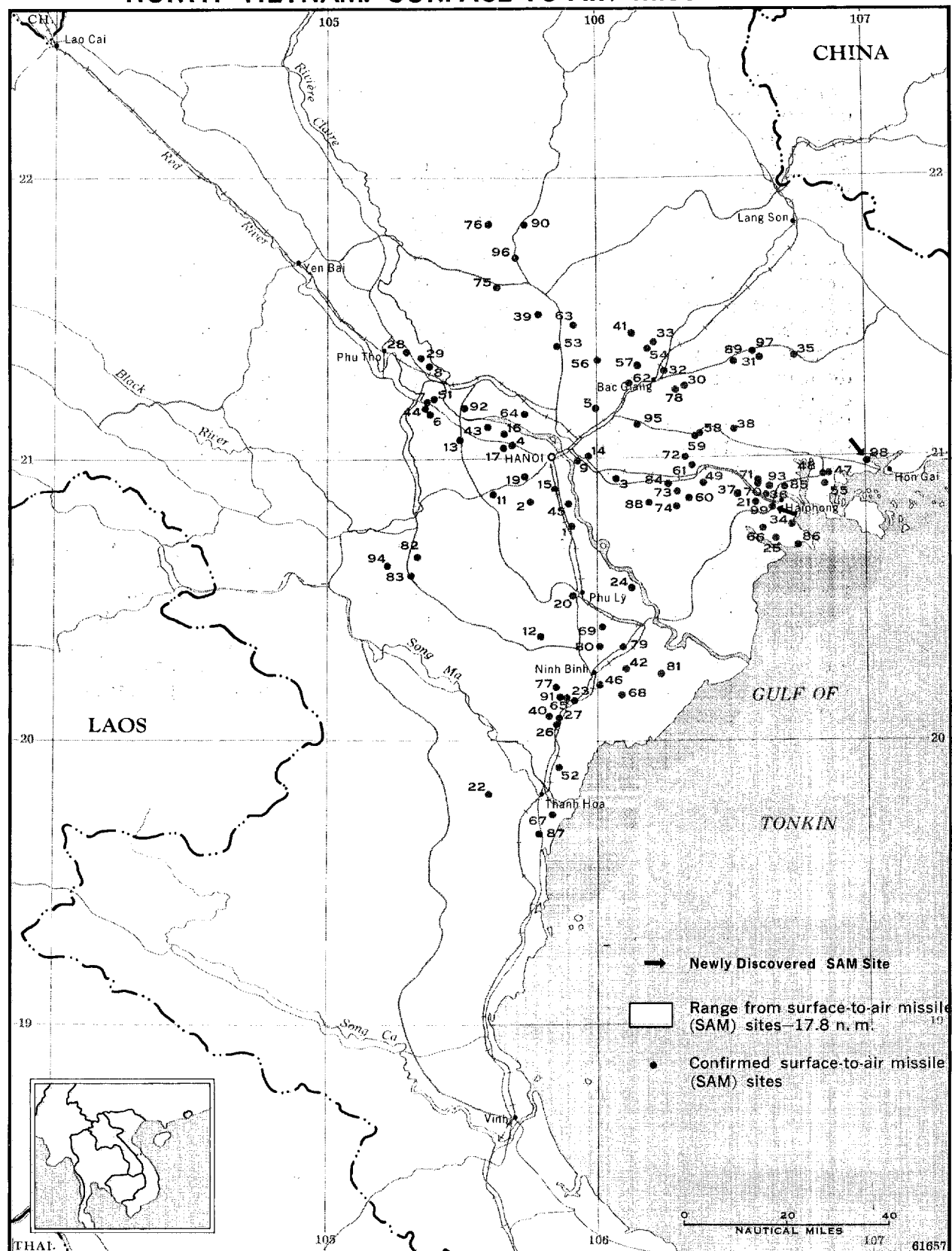
6. Officials of the US mission in Saigon, who met on 23 March with new Economy Minister Au Truong Thanh, report that he is delaying action on certain fiscal measures agreed to at Honolulu. Thanh described the present situation as shaky and indicated that he could not push too far lest dissatisfied elements band together to bring down the government.

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NORTH VIETNAM: SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILE SITES



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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. Two newly detected unoccupied SAM sites in the Haiphong area extend the SAM envelope about 8 miles northeast of the city. Of the 99 sites detected to date, three have been abandoned, leaving 96 sites which are capable of receiving equipment. The number of SAM firing battalions in North Vietnam is still estimated to be on the order of 20. Thus far, three SAM regiments have been identified and another may be operating in the southern part of North Vietnam along Route 1A between Thanh Hoa and Vinh.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. Hanoi is apparently attempting to demonstrate to both Peking and Moscow that DRV participation in the Soviet party congress does not constitute any departure from its past, balanced position in the Sino-Soviet dispute.

2. Without directly mentioning DRV participation in the congress, Hanoi radio on 25 March announced that a North Vietnamese party delegation headed by party First Secretary Le Duan had recently left for China on a "friendly visit." Most of the members of the DRV politburo saw the delegation leave. The broadcast also noted that while in Peking the delegation had held "cordial talks with a delegation of the CCP" and that the talks took place in a "fraternal atmosphere." Le Duan is reported to be leading the DRV delegation to the Soviet party congress.

3. The fact that Le Duan was not met by suitably senior Chinese party officials while in Peking is a clear indication of Chinese concern and displeasure over Hanoi's decision to send a high-level delegation to Moscow.

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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. Western European Communists are sponsoring anti-US-Vietnam policy demonstrations during the period 25-27 March in response to the call by the World Peace Council Presidium meeting in Budapest which ended on 22 March. French, Italian, and Swedish Communist party and front groups are reportedly planning marches and protest activity on a larger scale than any previous time.

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